
*The Belief of the ATHANASIAN CREED
not required by the Church of England as
necessary to Salvation.*

In a Letter to a Friend.

My worthy and dear Friend;

SIR, You cannot but remember, that when I was lately in your good Company, there was a Discourse concerning the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as delivered in the Creed call'd *Athanasius's*; and that there was a Person present who declared his Opinion to be, that the Church of *England* did not require the Belief of that Doctrine as necessary to eternal Salvation, and the Reasons he gives for that his Opinion are briefly these, viz.

1. Because (saith he) no Persons are by the Church of *England* (nor I verily think by any Church) ever baptized into the Faith, as contained in that Creed, but in the Apostles Creed.

2. As Persons are admitted by the Church of *England* into her Communion without the Belief of that Creed, so in her Office of

the Visitation of the Sick they are not examined in it, but upon a Declaration of stedfast Faith in all the Articles of the Apostles Creed (in which I could never yet find any thing of an *Athanasian* Trinity) Absolution is granted; and in the Office for Burial that Person is owned to be a Christian Brother: and in the last Clause of the Exhortation, immediately preceding the Apostles Creed, in that Office of Visitation 'tis plain, that he that believes the Articles of the Apostles Creed, doth believe as a Christian Man should. And,

3. Because in the Exhortation, almost at the End of Office of Publick Baptism, he that hath declared his Belief of the Articles of the Apostles Creed, is said to believe in God; and in the same Exhortation the Child (as to

A Faith)

(2)
Faith) is chiefly to be taught the Creed, which I presume was never understood of the *Athanasian* Creed.

4. Look upon the third Answer in the Church-Catechism, where the Child is taught to answer, that his Godfathers and Godmothers did promise that he should believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, which Articles the Child being required to rehearse, *Quest. 5.* is directed, and says the Apostles Creed; and it is also evident by the Office of Baptism, no other can be understood in the Baptismal Vow.

5. In the Office of Confirmation, the first Question and Answer, the Person to be confirmed doth declare in the Presence of God and the Congregation, that he doth renew the solemn Promise and Vow that was made in his Name at Baptism, which was to believe the Articles of the Apostles Creed; and neither the Church of *England*, nor yet any other ever dared yet to impose the *Athanasian* Creed as a Condition of Baptism, no more than *Pius IV.* and his Council of *Trent*, dared to impose their novel Faith as a Condition of the same, but content themselves (as we do) with that which bears the Name of the Apostles, as containing the Abstract of all Primitive Christianity. See *Dr. Ford's* Sermon before the Lord-Mayor, *June 5,*

1692. p. 18. And by such Practice 'tis apparent, as the Doctor there clearly argues, that whatsoever Men may talk, yet they do not believe those Articles to be *de fide*, and necessary to Salvation, without the Profession of which they admit by Baptism Profelytes into the Church; and consequently that Men cannot exclude those from their Church, for not believing those Articles that they dare not impose, nor mention to those they admit to be Members of their Church.

But I find 'tis commonly objected, that the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as delivered in the *Athanasian* Creed, is contained in the 39 Articles; and that every Clergy-man that holds any Place of Profit in the Church is bound to subscribe them, and give his unfeigned Assent and Consent to the same. To which may be answered;

1st. That those 39 Articles are not Articles of Faith but Peace, as several of her most learned Bishops have plainly declared. See Archbishop *Bromhall's* *Schism guarded*, p. 396. Which Passage is both cited and approved by the excellent Bishop *Fowler*, in his *Free Discourse*. And the Bishops *Laud*, *Taylor*, *Sanderfon*, have expressed themselves to the same purpose. And in a word, the Title of the Articles says as much.

2dly. Because, If the 39 Articles were Articles of Faith, the Church would baptize into them.

3dly. If the 39 Articles became Articles of Faith by subscribing them, then it would follow that the Clergy would have more Articles of Faith than the Laity, and then further there would be more than one Faith, which is contrary to the express Words of Holy Scripture.

4thly. Because in the sixth Article the Church declares that all things necessary to Salvation are contained in the Holy Scriptures; and thereto nothing is to be added, nor from it any thing to be diminished; the Canonical Books of the Holy Scripture are in that 6th Article named, & thereby the 39 Articles are excluded, otherwise than agreeable with them. But I find it's farther objected,

Object. That the 8th Article requires that the *Nicene, Athanasian* and Apostles Creeds be thoroughly received and believed; and hence it seems evident, that the Church imposes the Belief of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as delivered in the Creed called *Athanasius's*.

Sol. To this it may be answered, (1) 'Tis not said as necessary to Salvation. (2) In that very 8th Article the Church doth not absolutely require the Belief of it; but for that, or supposing it may be proved firmly from the Holy

Scripture: And that this is the Meaning of the Church of *England* doth appear, 1st. By the second Question, and Answer in the Form of ordering Priests and consecrating Bishops, set forth by Authority, where it is apparent that the Person to be ordained Priest is directed by that Form to declare, that he is perswaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all Doctrines required of Necessity to Salvation; and that he hath determined to teach nothing (as required of Necessity to eternal Salvation) but that which he shall be perswaded may be concluded and proved by the H. Scripture. You may see the like in the Form of consecrating Bishops, the second Question and Answer, and by the fourth Question and Answer, in the publick Form of ordering Priests: The Priest is to promise to drive away all erroneous and strange Doctrines, contrary to God's Word: Now I presume that every erroneous Doctrine is to be look'd upon as strange, and that we must not retain an erroneous Doctrine, because it has been of long standing.

And further, in the fourth Question and Answer, in the Form of consecrating Bishops: The Bishop to be consecrated doth promise to drive away all erroneous and strange Doctrine contrary to God's Word, and both privately and publickly to call upon others to do the same.

But

But to end, supposing but not granting that the Church of *England* had required the Belief of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as delivered in the Creed call'd the *Athanasian*.

1. She doth not assume the Privilege of Infallibility, for then she would be guilty of that which she charges (and that justly) as a Crime on the Church of *Rome*.

2. In Article 20 the Church of *England* sets forth what Authority it is she claims in Matters of Faith, or rather disclaims what Authority she hath not.

1st. It's not an Authority to impose any thing contrary to the written Word of God. Nor,

2^{dly}. An Authority to expound one Place of Scripture that it may be contrary to another; plainly that as the Church ought not to decree any thing contrary to the same, so besides the same she ought not to decree any thing to be believed for Necessity of Salvation.

Now from what hath been said it seems to follow, that the Church of *England* doth not require the Belief of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity as delivered in the *Athanasian* Creed as necessary to Salvation. For,

If she baptizeth not into that Faith, if he is said to believe as a Christian Man ought to believe,

that declares his Belief of only the Apostles Creed, and is thereupon owned as a Christian Brother; if thereby he is said to believe in God; to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith; if the Person to be confirmed renews only a Promise to believe the Apostles Creed; if the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not to be believed by being in the 39 Articles, or by their being subscribed to, they being no Articles of Faith, as by the Title of them and Preface before them is evident, no Person being baptized into them. And the sixth Article being a Key to all the rest, and shewing us very plainly how far they are to be believed; and if whatsoever else is before asserted is evidently to be seen, it appears for those Reasons, that the Doctrine of the Trinity, as set down in the *Athanasian* Creed, is not such an Article of Faith, in the Opinion of the Church, as is necessarily to be believed in order to eternal Salvation. Thus, Sir, according to my mean Ability, I have faithfully and conscientiously discharged my Promise, and beg the Favour of a Line, if this come safe to your Hands. I am,

Sir,

Yours,

F I N I S.